

Parachuting Past Patriarchy

A stylized illustration of a person in silhouette, standing on a blue background with white clouds. The person is holding a wrench and a screwdriver, and is connected by red lines to a large orange shape above them, which is the title 'Parachuting Past Patriarchy'.

Feminist Poetry by SFU Students
Edited by Tanyss Knowles

Parachuting Past Patriarchy

“I want to speak my voice! / I want to speak my real voice!”

- Muriel Rukeyser, “Suicide Blues”

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Introduction

Tanyss Knowles

At times it is hard to separate the image of the picketer from our notions of activism. However, the process of publishing feminist poetry is another form of activism. In North America during the 1970s a successful feminist movement was underway but its poetic voices were struggling to be heard. In response to the historical silencing of women, the androcentrism in the publishing and poetic community, and feminists' desire to use poetry as a form of expression, the feminist poetry presses burgeoned in that era. By creating a space for women-controlled publications and gendered poetry, these presses took an active role in challenging gendered oppression, which in turn bolstered the larger Women's Movement of the time. The purpose of this zine is to mimic the activism of those presses by publishing the feminist poetry of SFU student poets.

I classify poetry as feminist by employing Rita Felski's broad definition of feminist literature which "encompass[es] all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category." Therefore, in the pages of this zine you will find a diverse set of poems – some written about history, some about love, some written by men – but all from SFU poets and all feminist within Felski's definition.

My hope for readers of this zine is twofold. First, that this zine will add to the tradition of feminist presses. And secondly, in reading this zine, you will be reminded of the role art has in political activism, inspiring you to create a tangible political artifact for your own cause.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Roberta Neilson, Lara Campbell, and the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department at SFU for their support and funding. As well, I applaud Sean Wilkinson for his beautiful cover art. Finally, and most importantly, a big thank you to the poets who submitted their creative work making this zine possible.

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Emily Murphy in Circulation

Sandi Chan

being passed around
from wallets, cash registers and banks
for groceries, high heels and four months of Yasmin
Could she believe,
that her face could exchange such things?

Would she understand that her master plan backfired
That her social gospel,
while impounding fallen women
and sterilizing the unfit,
would be reversed and
racist
unacceptable
by our 2010 norms.

keep circulating, until the next national art direction

P.S.: thank you for the Persons Case.

THAT GIRL WITH NO FATE BUT A HISTORY

Roghiyeh Razmara

Let me introduce myself
Let me adjust my hat, put on my high heels, doll myself up,
And introduce myself

I am that girl from the past
That woman from the future
I am the history of my kind

I am that nasty sperm
And that cute egg
I am that girl with supposed to be
Remember me?

Supposed to be a bride, not bright
Supposed to own kids, not cats, not books
Supposed to buy home,
To make home with teeth and nail
And supposed to be...
And supposed to do...

I curse the supposed
I cursed my fate
I cursed my fate and flew away

I shit on the cycle that lacks cats and cigarettes
Turn my blindest eye to the destiny
My destiny, a big supposed to be,
Written, published, and sold way before my presence
With a nice cover
My picture kissing my groom
Smiling all the time
And titled "That Girl With No History"

I cursed my fate
Did not believe in one
And became one

A hundred eighteen pounds
Fifty three kilos
Skipped the wedding like a lunch
Skipped the kids like a dinner
Skipped the mother, like a daughter

I skipped my mother
Did not become one
I did not become my mother's bestseller

Now,
I am not that girl of the past
That bride with bright destiny
Lacking cats, books, and cigarettes

And now,
My mother detests me
Detests my cats, books, and cigarettes
Loves the husband
And hopes for his sperm
Uniting with my eggs
And prays for me
Writing a book, a bestseller
With developed character, theme, and no conflict
No Conflict At All.

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An Invitation to My Love of the Afterlife. (Your Food is Ready Darling.)

Shazia Peermohamed

Because I think I could love you,
only think and only could,
I'll split my skin clean
around the sternum.
You can fork your path into
the end
and suck that
spurting shit clean.

You see that the fat red thing
is still beating
and
because I think I could love you,
you may open
those chambers
as they beat.

Eat my spaghetti of
vein and artery,
dip it into
my now
congealing crimson cream.

Enjoy it my darling, please.

Eat my licorice clots
for desert and let the
half dry half wet
skin of blood
linger on your
taste bud.

And when you put your hungry hands on my breasts;
a resuscitation.

Here I am honey muffin, thought
you lost me?

And the polyps of my taste buds
smash soft
into yours.

Tongue sucking your silenced sighs and
picking and plucking
those forked veins
under
in your mouth
under
the slide of your spit,
banging into your teeth,
you are ending and
I am simply sucking.
My pulp of red stuck in
the Fahrenheit of
excitement.

Darling, you have a cavity,
I do think so.

Eating your vanilla neck,
my hands hungry on your chest;
a resuscitation.

Your body lapsed
magnetic back to mine,
jugular vein bangs into canine.
The end.

Now starting
in suspension,
still,
Both of us.
Still.

Sideswept pupils
stuck staring at
contours in the wood skin
of our book cabinet intellect.

Those contours darling, are not so hard for us
to climb
now that we're at.
the end.

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SPOTA CONTROLS THE STREETLIGHTS WITH SWITCHES

Ivan Drury

street lights flicker on when
walks near

act street in act

communicating

act presents the
one present
the woman's man
act

the act is communicating

whether windows
streets present
or knowing

is public man

present
communicating

is fucking communicating

to move the night

when walks near
the lights flicker on

Punished

Natasha Sanders-Kay

Punished for every fun fuck, every one night stand
every drunken walk
in the dark

Was I wrong to wear red high heels and drink beer

And to smile
when just the day before men on the street told me to smile

Like I was a stuck up bitch
for being afraid of the group of men staring at me

Tears and hot water bottles for a week

Apologies apologies

Teeth and tongue

Taught never to say no

and to hate ourselves
for saying

yes

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Gross Body Hair

Joy Walcott-Francis

Dark chocolatey skin
Covered smooth with shiny black hair
Fall effortlessly, uniquely
No, not curly, not pepper seed grainy
But straight and strong
Unashamedly the strength of a black woman.

I, was proud of it
So too were my country men
To their brethren they would say
As I go by
There goes an irie daughter
Nubian Queen, highly blessed Empress
The kind of woman to help I replenish this earth
Yes my brother, she, is a strong black woman.

To Delilah Samson lost his strength
And so did I to my colonial masters
Surrendering virgin legs, thighs
To razor and cream
Exposing now dark vulnerable pores
To unknown foreign elements
For woe be unto her who parades such strength in public.

From deep within the subaltern screams
Wanting to rebel, to fight back, to resist this oppressive system
But I was a coward, I was weak
I opened my mouth to speak, no words came forth
I pushed back, the walls did not budge
Then it hit me
No longer was I that strong black woman.

Girl Power with Nobel Prize Winners

Shiraz Ramji

One, Two, / Nobel Prize, Women Winners

Three, Four, / Wangari Maathai, Toni Morrison

Five, Six, / Aung San Suu, Shirin Ebadi

Seven, Eight/, Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan

Nine, Ten, / Rigoberta Menchu, Gabriela Mistral

Eleven, Twelve, / Marie Curie, Irene Curie

Thirteen, Fourteen, / Jody Williams, Mother Theresa

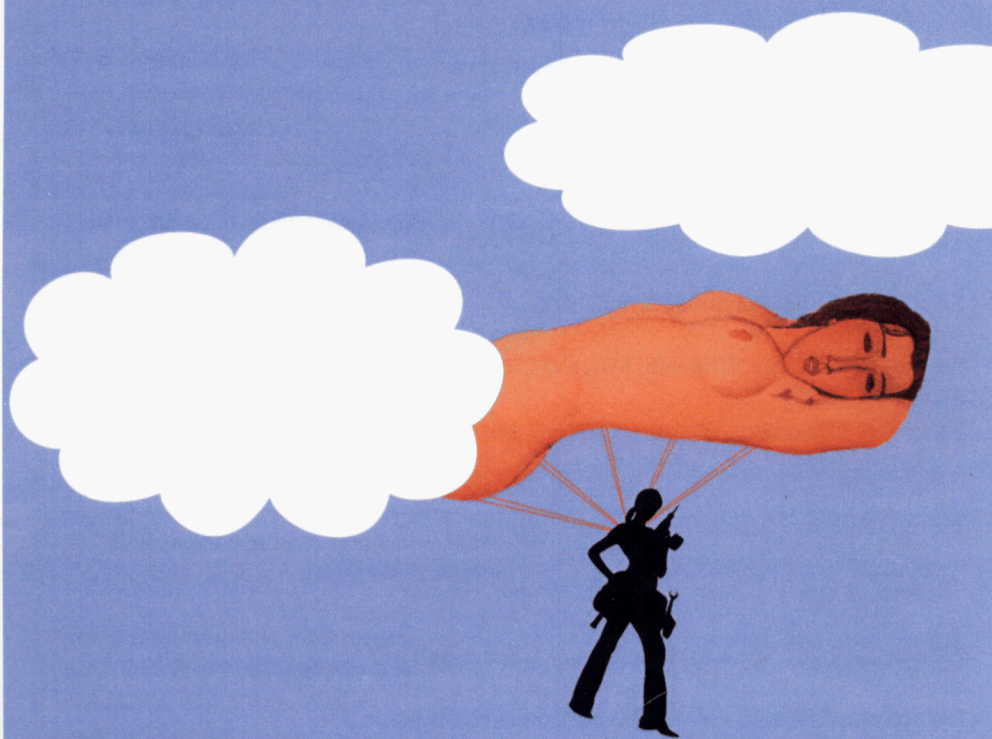
Fifteen, Sixteen, / Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch

Seventeen, Eighteen, / Alva Myrdal, Bertha von Suttner

Nineteen, Twenty, / Nadine Gordimer, Doris Lessing

...I have done this thing,
I and the other women this exceptional
act with the exceptional heroic body,
this giving birth. this glistening verb

-Sharon Olds



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